

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DNI-00	DODE-00
	DOTE-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC1-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	CAC-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00
	ISN-00	OIG-00	NIMA-00	PM-00	ISNE-00	CFPP-00	FMPC-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	NCTC-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
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DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 004972

SIPRNET

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2016

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PINR, MX

SUBJECT: DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF FRAUD

REF: A. MEXICO 3907

B. MEXICO 3700

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR CHARLES V. BARCLAY, REASONS
: 1.4(B/D).

1. (SBU) Summary: Underlying Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) on-going protest against the results of the July 2 presidential election is his contention that the election was marred by widespread fraud, a contention that has become a persistent battle cry among his most diehard supporters. Among AMLO's many allegations are charges that (i) the computer database tabulating preliminary returns contained a "secret algorithm" that favored rival Felipe Calderon; (ii) an effort was made to "lose" or hide a large block of votes favoring him; (iii) the official vote count was manipulated to disfavor him; (iv) PAN representatives and poll workers colluded to cheat him in precincts lacking PRD observers; and (v) the allegedly large number of spoiled votes and counting and arithmetic errors reflected yet another effort to cheat

him out of victory. On August 28, the Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF) rejected AMLO's allegations of widespread fraud, finding that he failed to document fraud in specific electoral districts. A set of recent studies conducted by Dr. Javier Aparicio of Mexico's well-respected Center for Economic Research and Instruction (CIDE) corroborates the TEPJF's finding. Aparicio analyzed a number of AMLO's specific allegations, finding that the available statistical evidence tended to disprove each one of them. We offer the following synopsis of Aparicio's research, drawing on information from other sources as appropriate, in the hope this it will contribute to a better understanding of the flaws underlying AMLO's now officially discredited allegations of electoral fraud. End summary.

An Improbable Algorithm...

2. (SBU) One of the PRD's earliest allegations involved the Federal Electoral Institute's (IFE) preliminary vote count (PREP) which was intended to provide early but unofficial election returns. The PRD alleged that the PREP somehow had been manipulated -- perhaps via a "secret algorithm" that automatically deducted votes from AMLO's totals or added them to Calderon's as the votes were received -- to ensure that Calderon led from the moment the first returns were reported.

Although the PRD conceded that as an unofficial count, the PREP was of no legal value, it argued that the Calderon camp and its apparent co-conspirators in IFE manipulated it to portray Calderon in the lead from the very beginning, thus establishing the public expectation that Calderon indeed was the winner.

3. (SBU) Supporting its allegation, the PRD argued that in an election as close as this one, AMLO and Calderon would be expected to have alternated in the lead for much of the count, until a sufficiently large and representative portion of the vote had been counted to establish the candidates' definitive trends. The PRD argued that since Calderon consistently led in the PREP from the outset, the PREP must have been manipulated.

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5. (SBU) In a statistical analysis of the returns, Aparicio took this explanation one step further, noting that of the approximately 130,000 casillas nationwide, approximately 70% were in urban areas, where Calderon had a 2.2% advantage, and 30% in rural areas, where AMLO had a 4.4% advantage. (Note: Aparicio noted that although AMLO enjoyed a strong advantage in Mexico City and some Mexico state urban areas, together they represented only 15% of the urban vote nationwide, not enough to overcome Calderon's advantage in Mexico's numerous

other urban areas. End note.) Aparicio found that urban precincts reported their results considerably earlier than rural precincts: by midnight, approximately 50% of all urban precincts had reported their results, whereas only 25% of rural precincts had. Such a phenomenon is not surprising: election workers in rural precincts had to travel far longer distances to deliver their tally sheets to the nearest IFE district office, and often were unable to do so until the following day. As urban precincts reported their returns more quickly, and as Calderon beat AMLO in the urban vote nationwide, it is to be expected that he would take an early lead in the returns, which shrank as pro-AMLO rural precincts reported.

Winning the "Lost" Vote

6. (SBU) On the day after Election Day, AMLO provoked controversy when he charged that IFE "lost" approximately 2.5 million votes, which had been omitted from the PREP totals (ref B). Later that day, IFE President Luis Carlos Ugalde explained that such votes had not been lost; rather, by prior agreement with all the parties, tally sheets with errors or inconsistencies were initially omitted from the PREP and placed in a "file of inconsistencies." Only once these inconsistencies (mostly minor errors) could be clarified, would they be included in the PREP totals. As it turned out, the votes in the "file of inconsistencies" favored AMLO over Calderon, helping AMLO to shrink Calderon's preliminary margin from 1.04% to 0.63% (ref B), and fueling AMLO's allegation that an effort was made to hide these votes. Aparicio reviewed these precincts to determine why they favored AMLO more than the overall nationwide vote. He

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determined that 65% of these precincts were rural; given AMLO's decided advantage in rural areas, it is predictable that such votes would favor him. Nor is it surprising that tally sheets from rural areas contained more errors than those from urban areas, since rural Mexicans tend to have a considerably lower education level.

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Cheating Behind the PRD's Back???

9. (SBU) In support of their allegation that electoral fraud took place, AMLO partisans also argued that their candidate received significantly fewer votes in precincts where the PRD did not have Election Day observers. The implication was that free from the watchful eye of PRD observers, PAN observers -- presumably in collusion with the four randomly-selected citizen election workers -- were free to engage in fraud. Aparicio's statistical analysis disproves this theory. Although AMLO indeed received fewer votes in precincts without PRD representatives, Aparicio found that

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that Felipe Calderon likewise received fewer votes in precincts lacking a PAN representative. In fact, he found that AMLO and Calderon received fewer votes in precincts

lacking their own party's observers at virtually an identical rate. (Note: Furthermore, according to IFE statistics, the PAN and PRD had virtually identical coverage of precincts by party observers, 79.9% vs. 79.4%, respectively. End note.)

10. (SBU) Not surprisingly, Aparicio found that as a general rule, the PAN and PRD were able to field more party observers in states in which they had more supporters. For example, in AMLO's home state of Tabasco, nearly 100% of precincts had PRD representatives, whereas only 33% had PRD representatives in the PAN stronghold of Nuevo Leon. Conversely, the PAN had representatives at only 35% of Mexico City precincts -- a key AMLO stronghold -- whereas it had approximately 90% coverage in its own stronghold of Guanajuato. Aparicio concluded it was highly unlikely that there was any causal relationship between the presence of a party's observer and the number of votes the party received. Rather, AMLO and Calderon tended to receive fewer votes in precincts where they had no party observers because they often were unable to field observers in regions in which they had little support.

Spoiled Votes Did Not Spoil AMLO's Victory

11. (SBU) AMLO supporters also argued that the allegedly high number of spoiled or null votes in this year's election raised suspicions that numerous AMLO votes were counted as spoiled, presumably where the PRD had no party representatives to defend those votes. This argument suffers from two flaws. First, while the number of spoiled votes in absolute terms was higher this year than in 2000 -- there were more voters this year -- the percentage of spoiled votes was virtually the same (2.16% vs. 2.10%). Second, Aparicio found no relationship whatsoever between the absence of PAN or PRD representatives and the number of spoiled votes in the precinct, repudiating the PRD's argument. He did find, however, that there tended to be more spoiled votes in rural areas -- which tended to favor AMLO and PRI candidate Roberto Madrazo -- than in urban areas. Again, as rural voters tend to be far less educated and sophisticated than urban voters, it is not surprising that they were more likely to spoil their votes by marking their ballots improperly.

Nor Did Errors Deny AMLO Los Pinos

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12. (SBU) Yet another argument advanced by AMLO supporters was that there were an unusual number of errors -- both counting and arithmetic -- in this year's election and that these errors somehow reflected an effort to cheat AMLO of victory. Again Aparicio's research uncovered two flaws in this theory. First, while Aparicio found that indeed there were numerous arithmetic errors this year, the number of errors was nevertheless 5% lower than in the 2000 presidential election. Second, he found that there was little difference in the error rate in precincts won by Calderon as opposed to those won by AMLO.

13. (SBU) Note: A study by Hugo Almada Mireles of the Citizens' Committee for Monitoring the Electoral Process suggests that the final, August 5-9 recount of approximately 12,000 precincts uncovered far more errors favorable to Calderon than to AMLO, particularly in the PAN strongholds of Guanajuato and Jalisco. We strongly discount the integrity of this study, however, because it was based entirely on unofficial recount returns supplied by the PRD, which have proven notoriously unreliable throughout the post-electoral process. End note.)

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